

PREFIXES

Prefix is a word element located at the beginning of a word. They are used in medical terms to denote ***position, number and measurement, and direction***. Prefixes of position describe a ***place*** or ***location***. Prefixes of number and measurement describe an ***amount, size, or degree of involvement***. Prefixes of direction indicate a ***pathway*** or ***route***. Many other common prefixes may also be used to change the meaning of a word.

1- epi- = above, upon.

Examples: ***epi***gastric = pertaining to above the stomach

epicardium = above the heart

epicondyle = above the articular area

2- hypo- = under, below, deficient, low.

Examples: ***hypo***dermic = pertaining to under the skin

hypotension = low pressure

hypoglycemia = a condition of low glucose in the blood

hypoxia = a condition of low oxygen

hypochondrium = below the cartilages

hypoglossal = pertaining to under the tongue

3- hyper- = excessive, high, above normal.

Examples: ***hyper***calcemia = excessive calcium in the blood

hypertension = excessive (high) pressure

hyperglycemia = a condition of excessive (high) glucose in the blood

4- infra- = under, below, basic.

Examples: ***infra***costal = below the ribs

infraorbital = below the orbit

infrastructure = basic structures

5- *bi-* = two.

Examples: *bi*lateral = pertaining to two sides

bicuspid = has two cusps

bilingual = speaks two languages

bidirectional = pertaining to two opposite directions

biannual = occurring twice (two times) a year

bifid = split or cleft into two parts

6- *dipl-* and *diplo-* = double.

Examples: *diplo*opia = double vision

*diplo*bacterial = bacteria linked together in pairs

7- *hemi-* = one half.

Examples: *hemi*plegia = paralysis of one half of the body

hemianopia = loss of vision in half the visual field

hemisphere = one half of a ball

8- *sub-* = under.

Examples: *sub*nasal = under the nose

subclavian = under the clavicle

subgingival = under the gum

sublingual = under the tongue

submandibular = under the mandible

subcutaneous = under the skin

9- *inter-* = between or among.

Examples: *inter*costal = between the ribs

intercellular = among the cells

interdental = between the teeth

international = among the nations

interventricular = between the ventricles

internet = among the networks

10- intra- = inside or within

Examples: *intracellular* = inside the cell

intracranial = inside the skull

intravenous = inside the vein

intranet = within the network

11- pan- = all.

Examples: *pancytopenia* = a condition in which all blood cells are decreased.

pan American = all Americans.

pandemic = epidemic affecting all countries or continents in the world.

(Note: Epidemic is a disease that affects a large number of people within a community, population, or region. Endemic is a disease that affect a particular people or country).

12- post- = after, following, behind, back.

Examples: *postnatal* = pertaining to (the period) after birth

postmeridian (PM) = afternoon or after midday.

postprandial = after a meal, after dinner or after lunch.

postmortem = after death.

posterior = back in position.

post - dam = a posterior extension of a full denture.

postoperative = following a surgical operation.

13- pre- = before, in front of, first.

Examples: *prenatal* = pertaining to (the period) before birth.

preoperative = before a surgical operation.

premier = first in position, rank, or importance (premier league).

precentral = in front of the center.

prefix = before the root.

14- pro- = before, forward, outward for, advanced, early.

Examples: *pro*gnosis = knowing before.

protrusion = something bulges out or sticks out (protrudes).

prognathism = protrusion of the mandible.

prohormone = inactive precursor of a hormone.

prolapse = fall down or slip outward.

progeria = early aging.

15- retro- = backward, behind.

Examples: *retro*version = turning backwards.

retromolar = behind the last molar.

retrognathism (or retrognathia) = further backward position of mandible.

retrograde = a backward or usual direction.

16- macro- = large.

Examples: *macro*cyte = large cell.

macrognathia = large mandible.

macroglossia = large tongue.

macrodontia = large tooth (or teeth).

17- micro- = small.

Examples: *micro*scope = instrument for examining small (objects).

microdontia - very small tooth (or teeth).

microorganism = very small creature.

18- mono- = one.

Examples: *mono*saccharide = one sugar molecule.

mononuclear = has one nucleus.

monocracy (monocrat) = government by one person.

19- uni- = one, single.

Examples: *unipolar* = consists of one pole.

unicellular = consists of a single cell.

20- multi- = many, much.

Examples: *multigravida* = woman who has been pregnant more than once.

multilocular = having many locations (or places).

21- poly- = many, much, excessive.

Examples: *polyuria* = many urinations (much urine production).

polyphagia = excessive eating or appetite.

polydipsia = excessive thirst or excess drinking.

22- primi- = first.

Examples: *primigravida* = woman during her first pregnancy.

primary = the first.

23- quadri- = four.

Examples: *quadriplegia* = paralysis of four limbs.

quadrilateral = has four straight sides.

24- tri- = three.

Examples: *triceps* = three heads.

trilaminar = consists of three layers.

Exercise: Identify the prefixes in (and define) the following terms:

epidemic, epinephrine, hyponatremia, hyperkalemia, hypercholesterolemia, hypotonia, infratemporal, infrahyoid, bigamous, bicentennial, bicycle, binuclear, hemifacial, hemihepatectomy, subdural, subcortical, intercontinental, intrauterine, intraoral,